

Digital Media Part 3

Crossover Literature-Movie Connections

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While many successful young adult novels have been translated into feature-length films, some teens are ready for mature content and the complexities of films made for adults. Middle and high school students have been enjoying works by Jane Austen, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Mark Twain for generations. In the 1970s, literature written specifically for young adults became commonplace. However, teens continued to enjoy works by adult authors such as Toni Morrison, Stephen King, and Alice Walker.

Some books are found in both young adult and adult sections of the library and are thus difficult to classify. For instance, **The Book Thief** (2005) by Markus Zusak is an award-winning novel about life in Germany during World War II. The film adaptation (PG-13, 7.6, 2013) is faithful to the book, so teen readers are likely to be happy with the adaptation.

From **The Shining** (1977) (R, 8.4, 1980) and **Misery** (1987) (R, 7.8, 1990) to multiple versions of **Carrie** (1974), Stephen King books are popular in high schools everywhere. Encourage youth to read **It** (1986) and make comparisons between the 1990 miniseries and the 2017 film version. Another film is in the works, so get ready for another horror celebration in the library.



The Book Thief novel and movie poster

CROSSOVER LITERATURE

Crossover literature blurs the line between young adult and adult literature. Although it's often associated with adults reading books for youth, like J. K. Rowling's **Harry Potter** series, it also applies to teens as they transition to adult literature.

ALA's Alex Award recognizes books written for adults with special appeal to teens. This type of crossover literature can be combined with the enthusiasm many young people have for digital media. The result is a lifelong passion for reading, viewing, and thinking. Keep in mind that although many crossover titles are found in school libraries, the movie versions are sometimes rated R.

Let's explore crossover literature across genres.

DRAMA

From crime and politics to social commentary, many teens enjoy literature that explores serious, timely topics. While many of these titles have adult themes, they provide young people with an opportunity to explore real-world issues. Romance titles are often adapted for the big screen. Nicholas Sparks' novels are particularly popular. In some cases, a book like **My Sister's Keeper** (2004) by Jodi Picoult (PG-13, 7.4, 2009) is different from the movie. This provides a chance to discuss possible reasons for changes between the works.

In some cases, multiple versions of a book are produced. For instance, both a Swedish (2009) and English (2011) version of **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** (2008) by Stieg Larsson are available.

From **Rocky** (PG, 8.1, 1976) to **Creed** (PG-13, 7.6, 2015), dozens of films depict sports events and experiences. Use movies to jumpstart interest in both nonfiction and fiction works in your library.

Alex Award winners include **Room** (2010) by Emma Donoghue (R, 8.2, 2015), **The Kite Runner** (2003) by Khaled Hosseini (PG-13, 7.6, 2007), and **Plainsong** (1999) by Kent Haruf (PG, 6.5, 2004).

Other crossover book-film connections include:

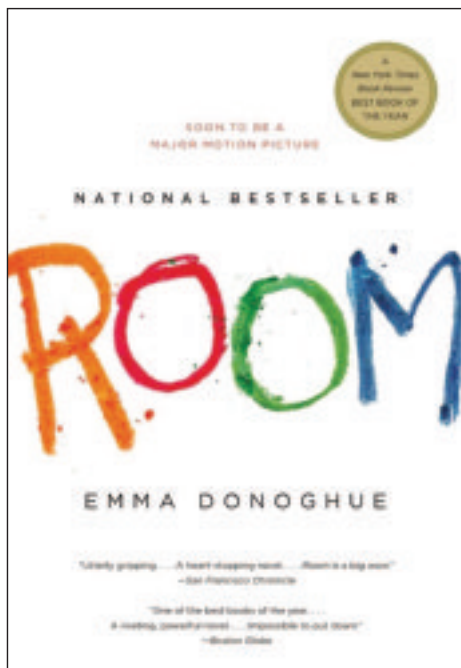
Forrest Gump (1994) by Winston Groom (PG-13, 8.8, 1994)

The Help (2009) by Kathryn Stockett (PG-13, 8.1, 2011)

The Hunt for Red October (1984) by Tom Clancy (PG, 7.6, 1990)

Jaws (1974) by Peter Benchley (PG, 8.0, 1975)

The Joy Luck Club (1989) by Amy Tan (R, 7.6, 1993)



Room novel and movie poster



A Man Called Ove (2012) by Fredrik Backman (PG-13, 7.7, 2015)

Me before You (2012) by Jojo Moyes (PG-13, 7.4, 2016)

No Country for Old Men (2005) by Cormac McCarthy (R, 8.1, 2007)

The Secret Life of Bees (2001) by Sue Monk Kidd (PG-13, 7.3, 2008)

The Silence of the Lambs (1988) by Thomas Harris (R, 8.6, 1991)

Where the Heart Is (1995) by Billie Letts (PG-13, 6.8, 2000)

FANTASY

From space adventures to time travel, crossover literature in fantasy and science fiction has themes that resonate with both teens and adults. From **Dune** (1965) by Frank Herbert (PG-13, 6.6, 1984) to **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy** (1979) by Douglas Adams (PG, 6.8, 2005), many science fiction novels and their films are timeless.

Alex Award winners include **The Martian** (2011) by Andy Weir (PG-13, 8.0, 2015), **Ready Player One** (2011) by

Ernest Cline (PG-13, 7.6, 2018), **The Time Traveler's Wife** (2003) by Audrey Niffenegger (PG-13, 7.1, 2009), **Never Let Me Go** (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro (R, 7.2, 2010), and **Stardust** (1998) by Neil Gaiman (PG-13, 7.7, 2007).

Other crossover book-film connections include:

Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell (R, 7.5, 2012)



The Martian novel and movie poster

The Fellowship of the Ring (1954) by J. R. R. Tolkien (film series, 2001-2003)

Field of Dreams (PG, 7.5, 1989) is based on **Shoeless Joe** (1982) by W. P. Kinsella

Jurassic Park (1990) by Michael Crichton (1994)

Life of Pi (2001) by Yann Martel (PG, 7.9, 2012)

The Lovely Bones (2002) by Alice Sebold (PG-13, 6.7, 2009)

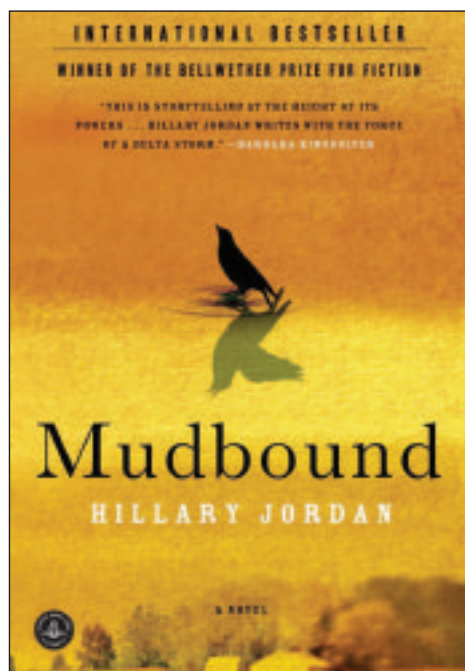
HUMOR

Young adults enjoy connecting with adult humor. Book-movie combinations like **Crazy Rich Asians** (2013) by Kevin Kwan (PG-13, 7.6, 2018) are an example. Both teens and adults enjoy Kwan's books.

Where'd You Go, Bernadette (2012) by Maria Semple is an Alex Award winner. The film adaptation will hit theaters in 2019 (PG-13).

Another crossover book-film connection is **The Devil Wears Prada** (2003) by Lauren Weisberger (PG-13, 6.9, 2006).





Mudbound novel and movie poster



HISTORICAL FICTION

It can be tough to get teens interested in historical fiction. However, movie adaptations featuring beautiful costumes and fascinating historical sets can bring these fictional works alive for viewers and inspire them to dig deeper into the works.

Westerns are often overlooked by teen readers but may be just the genre for some reluctant readers. The western short story *3:10 to Yuma* (1953) by Elmore Leonard has been adapted twice, in 1957 starring Glenn Ford (7.6, 1957) and in 2007 starring Russell Crowe and Christian Bale (R, 7.7, 2007). The three experiences would be interesting for teens to discuss.

Alex Award winners include *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1999) by Tracy Chevalier, a novel inspired by Johannes Vermeer's 17th-century painting. The novel was adapted as a stage play and film (PG-13, 6.9, 2003). *Water for Elephants* (2006) by Sara Gruen is a historical romance adapted as a feature film (PG-13, 6.9, 2011). *Mudbound* (2008) by Hillary Jordan tells the story

of two celebrated World War II soldiers who develop an unlikely friendship. The film adaptation (R, 7.4, 2017) released by Netflix was nominated for several awards.

Other crossover book-film connections include:

Beasts of No Nation (2005) by Uzodinma Iweala (7.8, 2015).

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas (2006) by John Boyne (PG-13, 7.8, 2008)

The Color Purple (1982) by Alice Walker (PG-13, 1985)

Empire of the Sun (1984) by J. G. Ballard (PG, 7.8, 1987)

Memoirs of a Geisha (1997) by Arthur Golden (PG-13, 7.4, 2005)

The Ox-Bow Incident by Walter Van Tilburg Clark (8.1, 1943)

SHORT STORIES AND NOVELLAS

Many award-winning short stories and novellas have been adapted as feature films. For instance, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (1922) by F. Scott Fitzgerald (PG-13, 7.8, 2008), *Eisenheim the Illusionist* in Steven

Millhauser's *The Barnum Museum* (1990) (*The Illusionist*, PG-13, 7.6, 2006), and *The Minority Report* (1956) by Philip K. Dick (PG-13, 7.7, 2002) are all short stories adapted as full-length films.

Read the short story *Ender's Game* <<https://bit.ly/2hYQMDF>>, originally published in the August 1977 issue of *Analog*. Then watch the movie *Ender's Game* (PG-13, 6.6, 2013) to extend the experience. Finally, read *Ender's Shadow* (1999) by Orson Scott Card. It's an example of parallel science fiction and follows the character of Bean, who has a supporting role in *Ender's Game*.

Alex winner *Just after Sunset* (2008) by Stephen King contains both previously published and new stories. Two of the stories make connections to earlier works and may begin a reader on a journey to explore the world of Stephen King. For instance, the short story N. mentions the towns of Castle Rock and Chester's Mill found in other works. The town of Derry, Maine, is included in the short story *Mute*. These towns connect to books and media such as *The Dead Zone*, *Under the Dome*, and *It*.

Two of Stephen King's novellas were made into popular movies. *The Body* (1982) became the coming-of-age film *Stand by Me* (R, 8.1, 1986). The novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* (1982) was first published in *Different Seasons* and later became the film *The Shawshank Redemption* (R, 9.3, 1994).

Seek out other award-winning young adult crossovers. *Memento Mori* by Jonathan Nolan was published in *Esquire* magazine in 2001. Nolan's brother Christopher turned the story into the movie *Memento*



Movie posters *Stand by Me* and *The Shawshank Redemption*

(R, 8.5, 2000). Film fans will enjoy the book **The Making of Memento** by James Mottram.

Annie Proulx's 1997 short story titled "Brokeback Mountain" was originally published in the *New Yorker*. The movie version of **Brokeback Mountain** (7.7, 2005) won an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. For teen writers interested in film adaptations, point them to the book **Brokeback Mountain: Story to Screenplay** by Annie Proulx, Larry McMurtry, and Diana Ossana. This title explores the process of adapting the story for film.

The short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" (1939) by James Thurber has been adapted twice for the big screen. The first version stars Danny Kaye (7.1, 1947), and the most recent version stars Ben Stiller (PG, 7.3, 2013). It's interesting to connect the story and two films to the time periods when they were produced.

In many cases the short stories were renamed for the feature-length movies. For instance, **It Had to Be Murder** (1942) by Cornell Woolrich serves as

the source material for two film adaptations known as **Rear Window**. The best-known stars James Stewart (PG, 8.5, 1954).

Science fiction short stories are often adapted as films. There are two film adaptations of Philip K. Dick's **We Can Remember It for You Wholesale** (1966), including **Total Recall** starring Arnold Schwarzenegger (R, 7.5, 1990) and **Total Recall** starring Colin Farrell (PG-13, 6.3, 2012). **The Story of Your Life** (2000) by Ted Chiang is the winner of the Nebula Award for Best Novella. This novella became the popular science fiction thriller **Arrival** (PG-13, 7.9, 2006).

Washington Irving's short story **The Legend of Sleepy Hollow** (1820) was adapted by Tim Burton for his film **Sleepy Hollow** (R, 7.4, 1999).

For teens with an interest in sports, the short stories found in the book **Rope Burns: Stories from the Corner** (2000) by F. X. Toole were adapted for the film **Million Dollar Baby** (PG-13, 8.1, 2004).

For students interested in immers-

ing themselves at the intersection of novellas, films, documentary, and parody, there's nothing more fascinating than an in-depth exploration of the 1979 Vietnam War epic **Apocalypse Now** (R, 8.5, 1979), based on Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** (1899) novella. **Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse** (R, 8.2, 1991) is a documentary film about the challenges of producing the movie and the parallels with the original novella. Just for fun, the movie **Tropic Thunder** (R, 7.0, 2008) parodies both **Apocalypse Now** and the documentary **Hearts of Darkness**. There's even a mockumentary short film titled **Tropic Thunder: Rain of Madness** (7.4, 2008).

OLD AND MODERN CLASSICS

The Alex Awards have only been given for 20 years. Most of us grew up reading novels written for adults. Check out the PBS series **The Great American Read** <<https://www.pbs.org/the-great-american-read>> for lots of examples. Many of these classics have multiple film adaptations. Like the books, some of these movies hold up over time while others don't.

Whether you ask a 17-year-old or a 70-year-old about the classics they read in school, the list will contain many of the same books. It's likely that many of those students watched the movies instead of reading the books.

The Scarlet Letter (1850) by Nathaniel Hawthorne continues to be a popular choice of high school teachers. Although an R-rated film version (5.2, 1995) is available, it's much more fun to compare the novel with the contemporary movie **Easy A** (PG-13, 7.1, 2010), starring Emma Stone.

Many of Jane Austen's novels have

become films, including **Sense and Sensibility** (1811) (PG, 7.7, 1995) and numerous versions of **Emma** (1815). **Pride and Prejudice** (1813) has been produced for both the large and small screen; however, the 1995 and 2005 versions are the most popular.

Consider an activity that involves students in selecting a book and film combination to explore. Ask youth to compare the book with the movie and reflect on the time periods when each was produced. This activity requires high-level thinking and can't be completed by simply reading the SparkNotes. Some potential examples include:

A Clockwork Orange (1962) by Anthony Burgess (R, 8.3, 1971)

The Count of Monte Cristo (1844) by Alexandre Dumas (PG-13, 7.8, 2002)

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep (1968) by Philip K. Dick (**Blade Runner**, R, 8.2, 1982)

Dracula (1897) by Bram Stoker (R, 7.5, 1992)

The Grapes of Wrath (1939) by John Steinbeck (8.1, 1940)

Great Expectations (1861) by Charles Dickens (1946, 2012)

The Great Gatsby (1925) by F. Scott Fitzgerald (PG-13, 1974, 2013)

I Am Legend (1954) by Richard Matheson (PG-13, 7.2, 2007)

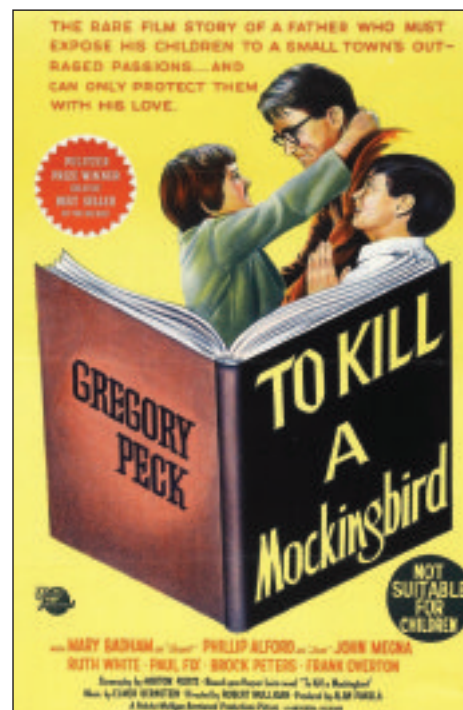
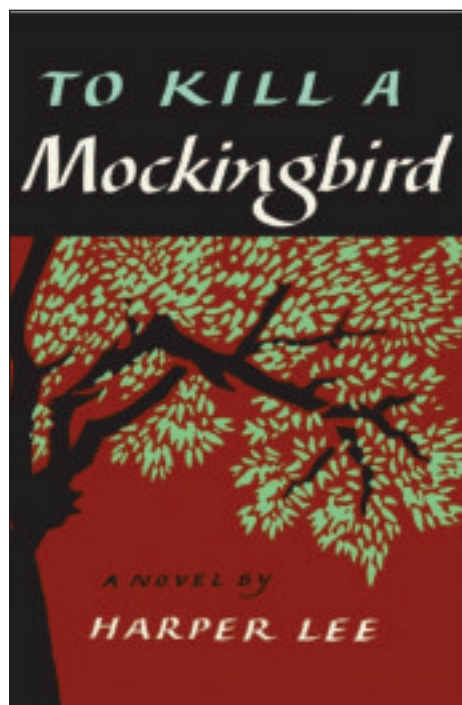
Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte (2011, 1996)

The Last of the Mohicans (1826) by James Fenimore Cooper (R, 7.8, 1992)

Les Misérables (1862) by Victor Hugo (PG-13, 1998, 2012)

Little Women (1868) by Louisa May Alcott (1994, 2017, 2018, 2019)

Lonesome Dove (1985) by Larry McMurtry (miniseries, 8.7, 1989)



To Kill a Mockingbird book cover and movie poster

Lord of the Flies (1954) by William Golding (1963, 1990)

Murder on the Orient Express (1934) by Agatha Christie (1974, 2017)

Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) by George Orwell (7.2, 1984)

Of Mice and Men (1937) by John Steinbeck (PG-13, 7.3, 1992, 2014)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1962) by Ken Kesey (R, 8.7, 1975)

To Kill a Mockingbird (1960) by Harper Lee (8.3, 1962)

The War of the Worlds (1898) by H. G. Wells (PG-13, 6.5, 2005)

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte (6.1, 2011)

Use the Sherlock Holmes films to generate interest in reading the classic stories by Arthur Conan Doyle. Many of Doyle's works are available as free e-books online. The films include **Sherlock Holmes** (PG-13, 7.6, 2009), **Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows** (PG-13, 7.5, 2011), and a planned 2020 film. Numerous other adaptations are available. Of particular note is the television series featuring Benedict Cumberbatch (**Sherlock**, 2010–2017).

Ray Bradbury is another author whose books became well-known movies, such as **Fahrenheit 451** (1953) (1966, 2018). Also look for the graphic novel to kick off the experience. **Something Wicked This Way Comes** (1962) by Bradbury (PG, 6.8, 1983) is another example.

The works of Shakespeare have been adapted for the big screen numerous times. Go to *Shakespeare on Film* <<http://www.thefilmspace.org/shakespeare-on-film/>> for a complete list and many classroom extensions. In many cases, you can use particular scenes from the film to share rather than the entire work. For instance, you might make a comparison between two versions of the same scene. Look at the costumes, props, setting, lighting, music, and casting. You can often find clips on YouTube. Keep in mind that many films were inspired by Shakespeare's works. For instance, the plot of **The Lion King** (1994, 2019) can be found in Shakespeare's **Hamlet**.

Many films containing classic characters such as Robin Hood, King Ar-



thur, and Tarzan are only loosely based on the original stories. However, these are a good way to jumpstart interest in tracing the history of these legends.

CONCLUSION

A wide range of award-winning authors appear on ALA's Alex Award list each year. Try out new authors by watching films based on their work. For instance, Meg Rosoff is known for both her young adult and adult novels. Her book **The Bride's Farewell** (2009) was an Alex recipient. Watch or read **How I Live Now** (2004) by Rosoff (R, 6.5, 2013) to generate interest in this author.

As new movies are released, check out whether they're based on books that would be of interest to teens. Crossover literature and movie connections are an effective way to help young people make the transition to adult literature, along with building a lifelong commitment to reading and learning.

YA FICTION

DEATH & DARKNESS

Hutchinson, Shaun David. **The Apocalypse of Elena Mendoza**. S&S, 2018. 448p. \$17.99. ISBN: 9781481498548. Grades 8 up. This strange, stirring novel opens with irresistible lines, "The apocalypse began at Starbucks. Where else did you expect the end of the world to start?" Elena Mendoza, 16, is widely known as being the product of a medically verified virgin birth. She also hears voices, a fact that she keeps to herself. But one day when she's on break behind the Starbucks store where she works, Elena witnesses the apparently fatal shooting of Freddie, a girl she has a crush on. As she looks on in horror, the Starbucks logo speaks to her, telling her that she can heal Freddie with her hands—and she does. Meanwhile, the boy shooter gets raptured up to heaven in a beam of light. So begins Elena's series of agonizing choices about whether to heal those around her, even though bystanders are raptured each time. Full of quirkiness and serious questions, this is a pleasure to read.

Adeyemi, Tomi. **Children of Blood and Bone**. Tomi Adeyemi. Holt, 2018. 624p. \$18.99 ISBN: 9781250170972. Grades 9-12. King Saran, a harsh dictator, rules Orisha in West Africa, intent on wiping out all magic. Like many others, Zelig, 17, and her brother Tzain lost their mother in Saran's purge of mages years earlier. But Zelig and those who respect the old ways have been learning lore and fighting arts, dedicated to taking back their kingdom. With a fully realized fictional world, this gripping novel follows Zelig as she comes into her own magic on a quest to reach a mythical island. Narration switches among Zelig, the king's rebellious daughter who becomes Zelig's ally, and the king's son, still partly loyal to his father but attracted to Zelig. The grand adventure explores themes about anger, the uses and misuses of magic, and how tyrants justify their violent acts. An extraordinary piece of world-building that blends mythology, magic, culture, and history.

An, Na. **The Place between Breaths**. Atheneum, 2018. 192p. \$17.99. ISBN: 9781481422253. Grades 9-12. In this *tour de force*, a teenager named Grace recognizes that she's experiencing the first signs of schizophrenia. Chapters named for the seasons tell her story at different times and through different eyes. The dominant voice is Grace's, as she unreliably narrates her current life, living with her father near a top research lab. Her father apparently works there recruiting scientists to study schizophrenia, a condition that caused his wife to leave when Grace was young. Some chapters go back to Grace as a child while others seem to give the father's and mother's perspectives. The non-linear collage of voices and events reflects Grace's deteriorating connections to the world around her, pulling readers into her heartbreaking fears about the future. Powerful and heartbreaking.

McGhee, Alison. **What I Leave behind**. Atheneum, 2018. 208p. \$17.99. ISBN: 9781481476560. Grades 8 up. One-page chapters take the reader along with Will, 16, on his nightly walks around Los Angeles in this unusually beautiful novel. With his mother working the night shift as a nurse, Will is on his own after he finishes his after-school job at the Dollar Store. Both of them still struggle to accept the suicide of Will's father three years earlier. Will responds in part by performing acts of kindness—secretly giving small toys to a young boy who's alone a lot, leaving small gifts for a classmate who was raped, befriending an awkward fellow worker. Lines from David Bowie, Chinese blessings, and caring notes exchanged with his mother weave poetically into this evocative first person narrative.